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Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03 USIA-06

SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 FRB-03 PA-01

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PFOR, GB, US
SUBJ: GABONESE REACTION TO ASHLAND OIL PAYMENTS

1. SUMMARY. ON JULY 16 THE PRESIDENCY DISTRIBUTED A COMMUNIQUE CONCERNING THE PUBLICATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS OF STORIES THAT PRESIDENT BONGO AND OTHER GABONESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAD RECEIVED PAYMENTS FROM ASHLAND OIL COMPANY. ACCORDING TO THE AFP, THIS COMMUNIQUE DENOUNCED "THE SLANDEROUS AND ABSURD CAMPAIGN AIMED NOT ONLY AT GABON BUT AT OTHER OIL PRODUCING COUNTRIES" AND THREATENED TO TAKE BACK OIL RESEARCH PERMITS FROM COMPANIES WHOSE COUNTRY WAS SHOWN TO HAVE ENGAGED IN "BLACKMAIL, PRESSURE AND MANEUVERS OF ALL TYPES IN ORDER TO CREATE PARALLEL ORGANIZATIONS TO IMPEDE THE ACTION OF THE COUNTRIES OF OPEC." END SUMMARY.

2. ON JULY 16, GOG FINALLY REACTED TO STORIES IN INTERNATIONAL PRESS--PARTICULARLY ONE IN WASHINGTON POST THAT REVEALED NAMES, INCLUDING PRESIDENT BONGO'S--THAT GABONESE OFFICIALS HAD TAKEN BRIBES FROM ASHLAND OIL IN
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EXCHANGE FOR GRANTING ASHLAND CONCESSIONS FOR OIL EXPLORA-

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TION. ACCORDING TO AFP THIS COMMUNIQUE UNDERLINED THAT
ASHLAND MAINTAINS NO PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN GABON AND THAT
IT ACQUIRED ITS INTERESTS VIA STOCK MARKET OPERATIONS.
"SONCE ESSO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THESE
INTERESTS, ESSO HAS SERIOUS EXPLANATIONS TO AMKE TO THE
GABONESE AUTHORITIES REGARDING THIS AFFAIR."

3. THE COMMUNIQUE CONTINUES THAT IT IS USEFUL FIRST OF
ALL TO SAY "THAT THE CHIEF OF STATE DOES NOT IN ANY CASE
BECOME INVOLVED IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH PERMITS."
IT IS THE MINISTER OF MINES WHO NEGOTIATES AND PREPARES
A DECREE TO THIS EFFECT FOR THE SIGNATURE OF THE CHIEF OF
STATE, WHICH IS COUNTERSIGNED BY THE MINISTER OF MINES.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, SAID THE COMMUNIQUE, "THESE ACCUSA-
TIONS DO NOT EVEN HAVE THE MERIT OF SERVING THEIR AUTHORS
AND ARE A WITNESS OF THEIR PROFOUND CONTEMPT FOR THE CHIEFS
OF STATE OF THE THIRD WORLD. HOW ELSE CAN ONE UNDERSTAND
HOW AN INSIGNIFICANT SUM OF DOLS 150,000 COULD BE PROPOSED
AS A BRIBE TO THE CHIEF OF STATE OF A COUNTRY SUCH AS GABON.
ONE COULD LAUGH AND LEAVE IT AT THAT IF THIS PRACTICE
DID NOT CONCEAL INTENTIONS TO STRIKE THE RESPONSIBLE
OFFICIALS OF THE OIL PRODUCING COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY
THOSE IN BLACK AFRICA, VIA THIS DEFAMATORY CAMPAIGN.
THE FACT IS THAT, SINCE THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE PRICE OF
OIL, CERTAIN RICH COUNTRIES, WHO ARE CHARACTERIZED BY
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF DOMINATION AND INFLUENCE OVER
THE PRIMARY PRODUCTS OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, TRY BY
ALL MEANS TO IMPEDE THE ACTION UNDERTAKEN BY THESE
COUNTRIES OF THE THIRD WORLD IN THEIR LEGITIMATE PFIGHT
FOR THE ADVENT OF A NEW WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER. THESE
COUNTRIES TRY BY BLACKMAIL, PRESSURE AND MANEUVERS OF
ALL TYPES TO CREATE PARALLEL ORGANIZATIONS TO IMPEDE THE
ACTION OF THE COUNTRIES OF OPEC. AND NOW THEY TRY TO
TARNISH THE IMAGE OF OPEC'S LEADERS."

5. GIVING THE POSITION OF GABON, THE COMMUNIQUE CONTINUES,
"AS FAR AS CONCERNS GABON, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
FORMALLY AND CATEGORICALLY DENIES THESE GRATUITOUS
ALLEGATIONS WHICH ARE WITHOUT FOUNDATION, AND EMPHASIZES
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THAT OUR COUNTRY IS DETERMINED TO PURSUE WITH OTHER
COUNTRIES OF THE THIRD WORLD A FIGHT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF
DOMINATION FROM WHEREEVER THEY COME, FOR GABON IS CONVINCED
OF THE JUSTICE OF THIS CAUSE AND OF ITS TRIUMPH. THIS
IS WHY GABON DESIRES TO INFORM WORLD OPINION THAT GABON
IS CAPABLE OF REVEALING AT ANY MOMENT THE MULTIPLE
DEALINGS OF THESE COUNTRIES WHO BY THE INTERMEDIARY OF
THEIR SPECIAL SERVICES TRY TODAY TO DISCREDIT BY THESE

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PERNICIOUS MANEUVERS THE COUNTRIES WHOSE LEADERS FIRMLY
OPPOSE THEM IN THEIR CAMPAIGN OF DIVISION AND INTIMIDATION.
IF THERE IS NOT AN END TO THESE DEALINGS,
CONTRARY TO ITS NORMAL POLICIES, GABON WILL FIND IT
NECESSARY TO TAKE BACK RESEARCH PERMITS FROM THE COMPANIES
OF THESE COUNTRIES."

6. COMMENT. ONE MIGHT ARGUE THAT GOG WOULD HAVE BEEN
BETTER ADVISED TO SIMPLY DENY ALLEGATIONS AND LEAVE IT AT
THAT. BY MAKING THREATS TO TAKE BACK CONCESSIONS ALREADY
GRANTED, GOG PROBABLY HOPES TO ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENTS
(E.G., USG) TO KEEP INVESTIGATORS AND PRESS FROM EITHER
PURSUING INVESTIGATION OR FROM PUBLISHING NAMES OF THOSE
WHO RECEIVED MONEY, WHICH OBVIOUSLY WILL NOT BE RESULT.
OF COURSE, FURTHER REVELATIONS OF THIS TYPE WILL NOT HELP
AMERICAN POSITION IN GABON, BUT, GIVEN AMBITIOUS GABONESE
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, IT UNLIKELY THAT GOG WILL FOLLOW
THROUGH ON THREAT AND ACTUALLY TAKE BACK CONCESSIONS GRANTED
TO OIL COMPANIES. GABON SIMPLY NEEDS OIL AND ASSOCIATED
REVENUES TOO MUCH. GULF OIL LIBREVILLE FOR ITS PART HAS
TAKEN COMMUNIQUE AS PRO FORMA DENIAL OF ALLEGATIONS AND
EXPECTS NO CHANGE IN ITS OPERATIONS HERE. ATTITUDE TAKEN
BY LOCAL OIL COMPANIES PERHAPS BEST SUMMED UP BY REMARK
MADE BY ANOTHER OIL SOURCE, WHO SAID THAT AT LEAST NOW
GOG COULD NOT EXPECT OIL COMPANIES TO PAY FEE FOR SIGNATURE
OF CONTRACTS.
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